

The New York Animal Import Center

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has the responsibility of safeguarding American agriculture. Through its Veterinary Services (VS) unit, APHIS keeps foreign animal diseases out of the country and eliminates or controls domestic animal diseases and prevents their interstate spread.

New York's Wildest Visitors

What do kudus, bongos, dikdiks, and black-backed duikers all have in common? Besides being African mammals, representatives of each type have moved through the ports of New York and New Jersey and have been quarantined at APHIS' New York Animal Import Center at Newburgh, NY. Located at Stewart International Airport, the 20-acre site operated by VS has been open since March 1980. The site, adjacent to one of the runways, is located in a secure, fenced area with security guard protection.

The quarantine of livestock at Newburgh is an important link in the import process. This process includes the development of protocol between the exporting and importing countries, monitoring of disease prevalence and occurrence on a global level, import permit applications and issuance of permits, transportation, quarantine, applicable diagnostic tests, and notification to the receiving State that animals are being released from quarantine.

A Parade of Animals

Animals, poultry, and other birds must have an import permit and health certificate when they are brought into the country. The permit shows what types of animals are being imported, their country of origin, who is exporting them, who is importing them, their ports of embarkation and arrival, their route, their mode of travel, and the purpose for which they are being imported. All of this information is important because it allows Center employees to identify each animal and track it. Accompanying health certificates show that the animals were inspected before they left their country and have received the proper diagnostic examination and treatment for entry into the United States.

All animals must be imported through the Center if they are susceptible to or are capable of carrying diseases or pests that could seriously endanger U.S. domestic livestock or poultry. From September 1, 2001, through September 1, 2002, more than 4,000 horses, 416 swine, 41 llamas, and 50 zoo ruminants were imported through the Center. In addition, 1,158 birds of different species passed through the Center.

When a shipment of animals arrives either by plane or ship at the ports of New York or New Jersey, an APHIS port veterinarian gives the animals a preliminary examination. The veterinarian also checks the identification of the animals, the health certificates, and permits. The animals then are transferred to a truck that takes them directly to the Center. If any information is lacking—such as residence, health statistics, and pre-export history—the animals are refused entry and held at the Center until the problem is corrected. If the problem cannot be corrected, the animals are returned to their country of origin.

At the Center, veterinarians once again check the animals' identification and various papers. They are then given a thorough examination and are sprayed to eliminate external parasites. Finally, the animals are isolated and begin their quarantine.

The quarantine period allows the staff to observe the animals for signs of disease and to conduct diagnostic procedures. For example, birds are held in isolation for a period of 30 days. If, at the end of that time, they show no signs of disease, meet all requirements of the import protocol, and pass diagnostic testing, they are released to the importer or a designated agent.

Housing Animals

The New York Animal Import Center consists of 18 buildings. Upon arrival, imported animals and birds are contained within a fenced compound, of which 13 are animal barns.

Cattle, horses, birds, waterfowl, and zoo animals are each housed in different barns designed specifically for them. The barns are separated by 100 feet of open space, and each barn is equipped with a ventilation system designed to prevent airborne infection spreading from one lot of animals to another.

The largest horse barns can accommodate 38 horses; the Center can accommodate a total of 125 horses.

Animals are quarantined for a period of 3, 7, 30, or 60 days depending upon their origin and their species.

Biosecurity

Once animals are admitted to the quarantine building, they remain within a biologically secure unit. In order to ensure the integrity of the biosecurity, all employees and visitors must wear government-issued clothing. Persons entering and leaving the different quarantine areas must wash their boots in a chemical foot bath. Also, when entering or leaving the facility and when going between some of the barns, visitors must take showers.

Center Personnel

The New York Animal Import Center employs 20 people full time. This includes two veterinarians, two office workers, and a staff of animal handlers. These men and women work year round to help people import animals from foreign countries without bringing in any animal diseases.

Import Permits

To obtain an import permit for the port of New York as well as to reserve space at the Center, applicants must complete form VS 17-129 and return it with the appropriate reservation fee. The reservation fee is 100 percent of the anticipated quarantine charges. A list of fees as well as the necessary forms are available and may be obtained from the Center.

To make arrangements to import animals through the New York Animal Import Center USDA, APHIS, VS or for a list of user fees contact:

USDA, APHIS, VS
New York Animal Import Center
200 Drury Lane
Rock Tavern, NY 12575
Phone: (845) 564-2950
Fax: (845) 564-1075

or visit the VS Web site at
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs>.

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